

How Do Filter-Tip Smokers End Up?

Does switching to filter cigarettes reduce the risk of lung cancer? According to one report, it does. Investigators at Roswell Park Memorial Institute find that the risk for filter smokers seems to be cut almost in half. But even with this reduction, the Buffalo, N.Y., researchers are quick to point out, lung cancer is still four times more likely among filter smokers than among nonsmokers.

The report by Dr. Irwin Bross, director of biostatistics, and sociologist Robert Gibson has been greeted with some surprise—and skepticism—by cancer experts. But then even Dr. Bross was surprised at the results. He and Gibson note that “the original purpose of the study was to assess the feasibility of a retrospective surveillance system for monitoring tobacco products.”

The results of the study—the first published report of the relationship between filter smoking and lung cancer—were not completely unexpected. Cancer experts have long felt that filters reduce the adverse effects of smoking. But they call the Bross-Gibson data “inadequate” to support the study’s conclusions.

Less Lung Cancer Found

In their retrospective study covering the years 1960 through 1966, the Roswell Park team interviewed 974 men who had been admitted to hospitals with lung cancer and compared their smoking habits with those of 974 men of the same age who were hospitalized for other diseases. Dr. Bross and Gibson soon realized that the percentage of lung cancer cases among those who smoked filter-tip cigarettes was distinctly smaller than among persons who smoked only regular cigarettes.

Zeroing in on this finding, they compared those who smoked regular cigarettes with filter smokers. Among those who burned up more than a pack a day for at least 30 years, smokers of regular cigarettes had a lung cancer risk 12.5 times higher than nonsmokers. Filter smokers in this group had a risk of 3.7. Reductions in risk were al-

so obtained in the other study groups. Averaged out, the Buffalo researchers report in the *American Journal of Public Health* (Vol. 58, No. 8), the results indicate that men who had switched to filters reduced their risk to 60% of what it would have been had they continued on regular cigarettes.

The effect of filter-tip cigarettes is apparent even after years of smoking regular cigarettes, says Dr. Bross. Most of the men studied had been smoking for 20 or 30 years by the time filters came along in the mid-1950s. “Apparently, the men were not at the point of no return.” ■

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